

ANALYSIS OF ALAIN MABANCKOU'S BLUE-BLANC-ROUGE AS A FLIPSIDE WORK

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Received: 12 Dec 2018

Accepted: 24 Dec 2018

Published: 31 Dec 2018

ABSTRACT

Victims of social existence emanate from various determinants such as wars and other forms of violence particularly structural violence (abject poverty, hunger, unemployment, squander-mania) etc. but in the present study principally from migration. The objective of the present research is to examine with scrutiny Bleu-blanc-rouge, the debut novel of the Congolese and Migritude writer Alain Mabanckou to find out if it qualifies or not as a flipside work. Flipside Literary Theory is applied to the novel. It is established that Bleu-blanc-rouge is a flipside work in the sense that it meets up with all the three criteria necessary for judging and classifying a literary work as a flipside literature, viz.: it has a flipside protagonist in its plot, Moki by name, who remains a flipside character rather than flip view till the unraveling of the plot despite the significant changes he makes in flipside societies both at home and in Paris. It is also found that Moki's disposition towards other victims of social existence is favorable and empowering in his community in Congo Brazzaville but partly favorable and empowering and favorable and disempowering in Paris. Furthermore, the disposition of Préfet, another flipside character in the plot, towards other victims of social existence is unfavorable and disempowering vis-à-vis his family members and community in Congo Bazzaville but partly favorable and empowering and favorable and disempowering in relation to the flipside society in Paris. While condemning the fraudulent disposition of African immigrants in Paris, Alain Mabanckou castigates the French authorities for the thingification and marginalization of these immigrants. In so doing, he sensitizes the public to the need to give a lot more attention to immigrants in a bid to alleviate their despicable plight and make life better for them in the host countries. He also uses it as an arm of combat to discourage young Africans from embarking on the migratory adventure having successfully debunked the myth of a paradisiacal Europe.

KEYWORDS: *Flipside Work, Flipside Literary Theory, Flipside Protagonist, Flipside Society, Flip View Society, Victims of Social Existence*

INTRODUCTION

One major characteristic of flipside literature is the writers' depiction in their plot of victims of social existence. Victims of social existence emanate from various causative factors, viz.: discrimination based on race/ethnicity, economic background, religion, ideologies, nationality, gender/sex etc. it is important to note that not every literary work featuring victims of social existence can be classified as flipside literature. Take, for example, Sembène Ousmane's Money Order has in its plot some victims of social existence occasioned by structural violence (poverty, joblessness, misery), characters like Ibrahima Dieng himself the protagonist, his family members, Gorgui Maïssa, but this novel does not qualify as a flipside

work. Similarly, Azouz Begag, the Algerian and Migritude writer projects, in his debut novel entitled *Les gone du Chaâba*, some victims of social existence (Algerian immigrants and their children born in France treated also as immigrants), but this migritude work cannot be classified as a flipside work. Aminata Sow Fall's *The beggars' strike* purports to be flipside work considering the negative impact of the strike declared by the beggars on the bourgeois protagonist. He could not get to make sacrifices to beggars in the street corners as these striking beggars have resolved never to go back to the city. However, *The beggars' strike* fails to fit into the three determinant features of a flipside literature. Even *Verre cassé* (Broken Glass), Alain Mabanckou's novel published in 2005, has in its plot some victims of social existence, specifically victims of man's oppression by woman, such flipside characters as *Verre cassé*, (flipside protagonist), *L'Imprimeur*, and *Le type aux pampers*, but it does not rank as flipside work. This is because the aforementioned works do not meet all the three criteria for judging and classifying a creative work as a flipside work. What are those criteria? Does *Bleu-blanc-rouge* meet one, two or all of the criteria? Does it qualify as a flipside work? These and similar questions will find relevant answers in the course of the discussion in this write-up which has for objective to subject Alain Mabanckou's *Bleu-blanc-rouge* to a thorough examination and analysis so as to establish if it qualifies or not as a flipside work. The research has at its disposal a novel theoretical framework – the flipside theory.

Alain Mabanckou is a prolific writer with about ten novels to his credit. He has been shown to be a humanist (Onyemelukwe and Odeh 17). A good starting point is an attempt at definition and explanation of key concepts, namely; flipside literary theory, victims of social existence, immigration/immigrants, migritude. This will be followed by an analysis of *Bleu-blanc-rouge* to discover its status whether it is a flipside work or not and finally a conclusion.

Definition and Explanation of Key Concepts

Flipside Literary Theory

What does the flip side mean? It means the less good or less popular side of something; the opposite side of it (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org>). It equally means the other side of a coin, that side of the coin which is not easily seen or which is ignored and which together with the side that is seen make up the total reality of the coin. Therefore, the flip side of a society or flipside society refers to victims of social existence who are ignored or undermined by the mainstream society or the flip view society deliberately or unintentionally.

In the context of this work, flipside characters refer to the socially and economically disadvantaged individuals and groups in society, “*les damnés de le terre*” (the wretched of the earth) to borrow this term from Frantz Fanon. They are the victims of social existence. Nwadike and Onunkwo view “victims of social existence: as people who simply as a result of “where and when they were born” or their place of residence and a host of other situations beyond their control “have been pushed to the margins of society and exploited even there”(204). In the words of Nwadike and Onunkwo: “These are people who are trampled upon, undermined or insufficiently catered for by mainstream society or by the elite such as roadside beggars, dumpster scavengers, petty traders, children hawking wares at traffic jams, homeless people, other categories of less privileged people such as refugees, migrants, contrite prisoners and people wrongly accused and punished”(204).

In the present day world, one witness an acute rise in the number of street children, child soldiers, child prostitutes, individuals dispossessed of their homelands through natural disasters like flood, hurricane, wars. The internally displaced people vegetate in camps, as in Nigeria, what with the nefarious consequences of attacks by Boko Haram and Fulani Cattle Herdsmen. Thousands flee their country as a result of extreme hardship orchestrated by drought, wars, genocidal attacks and other forms of violence; physical, emotional, psychological, structural (hunger, abject poverty, unemployment, squandermania, misery). Bernard affirms that economic and political crises force people into exile or compel them to search for a better place (21). No wonder, today migration is a serious threat to the whole world. Bernard describes it aptly in his book: "Immigration: le défi mondial" All these mentioned categories constitute the scum of the society, the lumpen-proletariat in Marxist term and the so-called flipside society or victims of social existence.

It is necessary to highlight young Africans' erroneous concept of the West as a paradise on earth, where one can easily make it in life. This has aggravated the incidence of migration as it constitutes a pungent drive for young Africans to migrate at all costs to the West. Think of men who stow away to Europe reaching their destinations dead or alive (Foxnews.com). What about those Africans attempting desperately to cross over to Europe daring the Sahara Desert and through Libya with disastrous consequences – enslavement, becoming victims of organ harvesting attracting gruesome and tragic death? What about thousands of Africans who get drowned in the Atlantic Ocean and the Red Sea while attempting to cross to Europe in rickety ships which end up capsizing and destroying lives?

Notice that despite the wide broadcast given to these nerve-wrecking experiences of migrants calling for the possible intervention of world powers considering the deplorable conditions in which these immigrants especially African immigrants live in the host countries, the phenomenon of migration is not abated but even increases unabatedly. According to Bernard, it is estimated that 3 million Africans have settled in Europe (19). He also records that there are 4.31 million immigrants in France in 1999 (7.4% of the metropolitan population) (127).

One begins to wonder if society gives enough attention to these socially and economically disadvantaged people. Nwadike and Onunkwo while theorizing the Flipside Literary Theory feel that societies should give a lot more attention to these victims of social existence (the flipside society). This feeling is even stronger in terms of what they consider as the absence of appropriate literary theory for appraising what is correctly described as flipside work. They opine that certain historical need or situation facilitated the birth of a literary theory but that victims of social existence in literature lack adequate attention by way of an appropriate theoretical framework or conceptual tool. In fact, as they observe: "theoretical frameworks, conceptual tools and practical approaches used within the broad background of research and scholarship are sometimes informed by real-life situations (196). Take, for example, Marxism and by extension Marxist literary theory, feminism, psychoanalysis, postmodernism, and masculinism have all historical antecedents.

Therefore, Nwadike and Onunkwo maintain that as far as flipside literature is concerned, a loophole exists in terms of appropriate literary theory. Hence their proposal of the Flipside Literary Theory which they expounded in their article published in International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature on November 01, 2018. The article is entitled: "Flipside Theory: Emerging perspectives in literary criticism" (195) In their own thinking, flipside literary theory in a novel theory which "fills a gap in literary theory" (195).

Flipside Literary Theory explores the ways literary outputs portray victims of social existence. They propose three determinant features or criteria for evaluating and classifying a literary work as a flipside work. The three criteria are as described below.

The sole and comprehensive interest of Flipside Literary Theory lies in:

- Establishing whether the plot projects a victim of social existence as the protagonist of the literary work or whether a flip view character is protagonised.
- Whether the flipside protagonist causes significant transformations in a society like causing the rise or fall of important individuals, groups or social processes while still remaining a member of flipside society; thereby underscoring the idea that marginalized people also matter and disregarding them amounts to impacting society negatively.
- Whether the disposition of the flipside protagonist (and some other flipside characters) towards other victims of social existence is:
 - Favorable and empowering
 - Favorable and disempowering
 - Unfavorable and empowering or
 - Unfavorable and disempowering

([www.journals.aiac.org.au>article>view](http://www.journals.aiac.org.au/article/view))

The theory insists that for a literary work to qualify as flipside literature, it must meet these three criteria; not just one or two of them but all three.

Flipside Literary Theory is described as novel not in the sense that it is the very first literary theory to raise public awareness of the deplorable predicament of the poor, marginalized and exploited people in society but because it makes this its sole concern quite contrary to other literary theories which carry out multitasking on many issues (205).

Flipside theory brings meaningfully and actively to the fore discourse in relation to victims of social existence where it rightly belongs. It establishes that both flip view society and flipside society deserve equal treatment instead of relegating the flipside society to the background and treating its members as the “forgotten or irrelevant humanity, courted and appeased particularly only when elections are at the corner or to win public admiration (205). I share with Nwadike and Onunkwo the view of the interconnectedness of the various literary theories.

Immigration

According to Le Petit Robert 2013, the word “Immigration” designates entry into a country of non-indigenous persons who come to establish there generally to find work. Philippe Bernard defines “immigration” as the act of leaving the country where one is born to find a better place outside pushed by political oppression, violence, poverty (11). Musa and Onyemelukwe define “immigration” as: the movement of persons triggered off by war, search for freedom, job and a

better condition of life, going from one country to another to settle there and struggle for their survival (8). The operational definition of immigration for the present study is as follows:

Installation of an individual or group temporarily or on a permanent basis in another's country, generally so as to escape unfavorable conditions of the home country (poverty, hunger, misery, war, exile etc.) and to enjoy in the host country baptized ironically "paradise on earth", where one believes one will easily find a job or other economic endeavors (Onyemelukwe, "Identité changeante")

Immigrant

"Immigrant" is defined by Grand Larousse de la Langue Française, Vol. 3 as One who migrates, who comes to settle in a foreign country. But Children of Maghrebean immigrants, born in France and having French nationality are being treated as immigrants in *Le gone du Chaâba*. A more acceptable definition of the word "immigrant is: one born a foreigner in a foreign land, who settles in France (Bernard 127). The individual can be of foreign nationality or of French nationality.

Migritude

African Literature has taken a new direction called "migritude" since the turn of the 21st Century. (Onyemelukwe "Migritude" 148-165). The word "Migritude" is coined by Jacques Chevrier in 2000, a word he used to describe the literary output of francophone writers in sub-Saharan Black Africa, who have settled voluntarily or by force in Europe or America practicing their writing career there. Migritude writers draw public attention, through their works, to the pathetic plight of African immigrants in the West by exposing the true situation of things in the West regarding African immigrants. This way, they sensitize the reading public and discourage young Africans contemplating flight to the West from doing so. They condemn racism and other forms of discrimination meted out to these African immigrants in the West, thereby calling for serious global attention on and alleviation of the suffering of these victims of social existence. Migritude, as a literary movement, is triggered off by the historical phenomenon of immigration. Chevrier defines the term migritude as a newly coined word which evokes the theme of migration, which is found at the heart of contemporary African stories, but also the expatriate status of most of their producers who have abandoned Dakar and Douala for Paris, Caen, and Patin (Afrique(s)-sur-Seine). Zanganeh explains that "migritude" is composed of two words: immigration and negritude; thereby emphasizing the fact that migritude is linked to immigration (The New York Times). Onyemelukwe expanded the geographical space of migritude literature to include Magreb, in fact, Africa as a whole. This can be gleaned from her definition of migritude: A movement or a literary doctrine characterized principally by immigration and identity in the creative works of writers who come from countries not only in sub-Saharan Black Africa but also in the whole of Africa, who settle in the West and practice their writing career in their situation as migrants or exiles ("Migritude" 151).

Migritude literature is generally characterized by autobiographical stories, for example Fatou Diome's *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique* published in 2003. Migritude literature treats themes like the suffering of the immigrants, identity crisis, the difficulty of integration in the host country, racism and other forms of discrimination etc. ("Migritude" 156).

The literary text *Bleu-blanc-rouge*, slated for ex-ray in the present study is a migritude work. It is to be examined carefully, this time around, in the light of Flipside Literary Theory.

Analysis

To what extent will *Bleu-blanc-rouge* qualify as a flipside work? Does it fit completely into the three criteria for judging and classing a literary work as a flipside work as earlier exposed in this research?

Let me start with this pertinent observation. As a migritude work, *Bleu-blanc-rouge* has a changing identity; on the one hand, it is set in Europe, on the other, it is set in Africa. Thus it has European space and African space. Furthermore, in terms of space, it has European urban space/European rural space versus African Urban space/ African rural space. In both Europe and Africa, the novel shows town space and village space.

Another important feature of this novel is that its writer, Alain Mabanckou crafted a plot that projects fraudulent immigrant Africans who are all fraudulent in their ways and live in Paris, flipside characters like Massala-Massala the omniscient narrator, Moki, his relation that facilitates his migration to Paris, Préfet, the oldest and most influential of African immigrants in Paris, dubbed “the saviour of all” in Paris (156), Benos and Sotè.

These flip characters had each a dream of succeeding if only the individual could migrate to France. Arriving in Paris, it dawns on one (as represented by the experience of Massala-Massala) that the visiting status will soon expire and he will be in an irregular situation, become a “sans-papiers,” one has no proper immigration papers to stay on in a foreign country. The individual’s dreams and aspirations are thus shattered having come into contact with the reality that the Parisian world has been shut at them (144). What is uppermost then in the person’s mind is how to survive. This dire concern will make him opt for any means of survival. It is not surprising that all of them are fraudulent characters: Moki deals in clothes and sells the wears two times costlier than what he paid for them in the suburb of Paris where he actually bought them while pretending to have traveled to buy them in Milan, or Naples in Italy. This is cheating, lying, economic exploitation of even his fellow flipside men. Préfet helps his fellow immigrants to regularize their papers through crooked ways. Ironically, this is a fraudulent practice, a criminal and jailable offense. He is the individual the most consulted in the milieu (148) but the most sought after by the police because of his criminal tendencies. He initiates the newly arrived Massala-Massala into his fraudulent business of selling train tickets. This evil genius, recalling the Balzacian hero Vautrin in *Le Père Goriot* and the hero of Vincent Okeke’s novel: *Le syndrome 419: le frère terrible*, this international crook with many names (Okeke 128).

Moki, Massala-Massala, Préfet and the rest of the African immigrants in Paris in *Bleu-blanc-rouge* possess multiple names; for example Massala-Massala has three names – Massala-Massala his real name, Marcel Bonaventure, adopted the name and Eric Jocelyn-Georges, his work name. Massala-Massala in this novel of zero focalization serves as the author’s mouthpiece when he describes the African immigrants in Paris as “noctambules” and “conciliabules” (134). According to *Le Petit Robert 2013*, the word “noctambule” refers to an individual, who moves about and enjoys himself at night; while the word “conciliabule” refers to the secret meeting of persons suspected of bad deeds. These two words used to describe African immigrants in Paris in *Bleu-blanc-rouge* portray them as individuals who engage in affairs of darkness, who have dishonest deals and conspiracies and who make compromises and fraudulent deals. This description links them to the characters in

André Gide's *Les faux monnayeurs* involved with the circulation of fake money.

Alain Mabanckou tells the reader through the mouth of the first person narrator, Massala-Massala, that these African immigrants make efforts, even fraudulently to enable them to penetrate a world which had been closed on them (144). This is the reason for which they engage in fraudulent activities, wear masks and live a paradoxical kind of life. 'Notice, the masks they wear during the day lie in contrast with their nocturnal habits/activities. What a paradox!

These African immigrants have to contend with racial discrimination and other forms of discrimination unleashed on them in France. Getting a decent job is out of the question for them. Therefore, they do odd jobs not minding how dishonest it is, as the end justifies the means. Perhaps what matters to them is their being economically empowered.

These African immigrants in Paris constitute the flipside society. More than a dozen of them live together in one room of a dilapidated building destined to be destroyed. They sleep on the floor wrapped in blankets. They eat and drink like paupers (chicken and Heineken) (136-137). They return to their ramshackle abode very late at night and leave very early to hustle to survive in Paris.

One wonders why the author's depiction of all African immigrants in Paris as flipside characters given to fraudulent activities. A pertinent question arises? Does it mean there is no African immigrant in Paris, who is meaningfully and respectfully engaged and who even belongs to flip view society? Even he, Alain Mabanckou, also an immigrant, is known to be an honest job in France as a writer. *L'Imprimeur*, a character in *Verre cassé* by the same author is in a good job, "un travail bien rémunéré, . . . on imprimait Paris-Match. . . (67) (a job well remunerated. . . printing of Paris-Match). *L'imprimeur* rides a posh car, marries Céline, a French lady, secretary in a pharmaceutical laboratory in France. One senses an exaggeration on the part of Alain Mabanckou while depicting all African immigrants in Paris as fraudulent folks. He is probably seeking for the acute way of drawing global attention to the horrible plight of African immigrants in France, specifically in Paris cautioning that the ill-treatment meted out to them by the flip view or mainstream society has hardened them psychologically and transformed them into various degrees of monsters impacting negatively the society at large.

It has been established in this study that the plot of *Bleu-blanc-rouge* has in it flipside characters, flipside society as opposed to the flip view society constituted by the French citizens. Back home in Congo Brazzaville, one witnesses the existence of flipside society constituted by near and distant relatives of Moki and their neighbors in the village-space while those in the corridors of power, the dictator and his entourage constitute the flip view society. According to the narrator:

Préfet would have been surprised on reaching the country, the central part of the city, Pointe-Noire, le Quartier chic and the wild coast where five-star hotels of Novotel Meridien and PLM have been erected. He would have been mesmerized to find their apples, strawberries. . . sold at Printario. He would have been greatly stupefied because we now have several Airports, almost everywhere in the country and tarred roads in certain important agglomerations like Tié-tié, OCH or le quartier rex (157).

Bleu-blanc-rouge needs to be examined now using the three parameters for judging and classifying a literary work as a flipside work.

Type of Protagonist

The plot of *Bleu-blanc-rouge* is woven around the central character Moki. Moki receives the attention of the author in the most prominent way. He is the connecting factor. He is related to Massala-Massala, the omniscient narrator and mouthpiece of the author. He is the one that facilitated Massala-Massala's migration to France. Even though resident in France, his return to Congo Brazzaville is marked with celebration and he parades himself as a king in the midst of his poor family members and community. In Paris, where he lives, he is the fulcrum, harboring all African immigrants in his ramshackle abode. The narrator tells the reader that Moki is the proprietor of the abode (137).

Apart from housing his socially and economically disadvantaged compatriots, he connects them to Préfet to get their papers regularized. This study concludes that Moki is a flipside protagonist. In other words, the plot has a victim of social existence as its protagonist. From the beginning of the novel to its denouement, Moki remains a flipside character even though he impacts significantly on others in the society as shall be seen shortly

Flipside Protagonist's Positive/Negative Impact on Society

Moki lives like a church rat in Paris. This helps him to save money to make life better for his people in Africa. Thus he builds "une immense villa blanche. . ." (43) (A magnificent white mansion) for his family, installs electricity there as well as a water pump (44). As observed by the narrator, young people gather in the evening in the major street in front of the villa to enjoy discussion in the electric light at night. . ." (44). Furthermore, Moki purchases and sends home two Toyota cars which the family puts to use as taxis. Thus the family crosses the border of lack. He succeeds in transforming the socioeconomic status of his family in a magnificent way even though it has not transcended the flipside society.

Moki impacts the whole village beyond every reasonable doubt. Once Moki arrives, one sees: «.....Des attroupe-ments. La rue grouillait de monde. La lumière éclairait leur parcelle toute la nuit » (55) (. . . people trooping in. The street was filled with people. The electricity lightened their area all night). Moki gives a listening ear to all and sundry, shares gifts to all, renders help to people as much as he can (55-60). He cares about Africa and his people and frequents home unlike, Préfet who turns his back on his widowed mother, sisters, and brothers, plays big while in hiding in Paris and cares no hoot about his people. That Moki impacts positively his people and is well respected at home does not rule out the fact that he is a flipside character like his flipside people.

Moki causes significant transformations in Parisian society. First of all, he defrauds the people through his sale of clothes. He takes possession of a dilapidated building slated for demolition. This he does to skip payment of rent anywhere. Listen to his advice to Massala-Massala: consider yourself lucky not to pay rent. It is a good start for making savings (135). But in earnest Moki, by so doing, shows himself as one who is not law abiding in Paris and is impacting negatively newly arrived immigrants like Massala-Massala. He makes the connection for the evil genius of Préfet to help such "débarqué" (newly arrived immigrant) secure appropriate papers though through crooked means and to recruit such in fraudulent economic activities in the foreign land – selling of fake train tickets. Massala-Massala is caught in the act by the police and imprisoned for eighteen months before being repatriated. Préfet, the hardened criminal escapes as usual. It goes without saying that racism,

other forms of discrimination and ill-treatment meted out to African immigrants induce negative emotions in them leading to their penchant to criminalities and spreading of such negative influences on individuals and groups in society as indicative of Moki's representative case.

Flipside Protagonist's and certain Flipside Character's Dispositions towards other Victims of Social Existence

The present study has established that in *Bleu-blanc-rouge*, the disposition of the flipside protagonist Moki towards other victims of social existence is of three categories. First, Moki's disposition is favorable and empowering with Moki's father, relations and community members back home in Congo Brazzaville. Moki chooses to live like a pauper in Paris so as to save money to empower economically his people back home in Congo Brazzaville as already discussed in this paper. He is concerned with a lot of his people, their poverty-stricken state and underdevelopment and thus is determined to empower them economically. This is his dream/aspiration that made him migrate to Europe as evident in his own words: "Je me contente de rendre ma vie et celle de ma famille le moins misérable possible au pays" (167) (I am happy to make my life and that of my family as less miserable as possible in my home country).

Moki's disposition to other victims of social existence in Paris is of two types: favorable and empowering and favorable and disempowering. Moki's vision explains his lowly style of life in Paris: occupying one room in a dilapidated building marked for demolition to save cost by not paying rent. Very accommodating, he encourages his compatriots, over twelve of them, to share it with him. He is favorably disposed to them with a view to empowering them economically. Alain Mabanckou uses *Massala-Massala* to paint vividly the level of suffering and misery of these victims of social existence in the following lines: we had no lift to arrive at the seventh floor. The building had no light. . . it had no other occupants apart from us. From the room, we heard all who ascended and descended. . . friends of Moki whom I did not know. We all slept there, each person not knowing what the other was doing for a living during the day. These friends arrived very late at night. . . in the room, they whispered, opened Heineken, ate smoked chicken and slept around two o'clock in the morning only to wake up at five o'clock. We woke up the following day some on top of others, like cadavers linked by the fate of a common grave. . . (136). It becomes clear here that Moki empathizes with his fellow flipside characters. He is positively disposed to them. It would seem that his disposition towards the flipside society in Paris is favorable and empowering in as much as he helps them make a living in Paris and he adds value to their economic well-being.

Massala-Massala continues with his observation that these victims of social existence are packed like sardines to sleep in that room; and worse still, they sleep on the floor, wrapped in blankets. Moki the proprietor of the abode explains the wisdom in this act to *Massala-Massala*: "In a foreign land, once a person buys a bed, one is finished forever. One ends up forgetting the way to return to his country (137)". He is probably making an ironic reference to *Préfet*, the first African immigrant in Paris, one with highest economic power, one who has helped most of the African immigrants to stay in France through his dishonest business but who has never returned home for about twenty years (156). He opts to live like a rich man in Paris, dress in designers' wears even though nobody knows where he puts up as he endeavors to hide from police arrest.

Moki philosophizes thus: “Paris est un grand garçon. . . un grand garçon, majeur et vacciné” (135) (Paris is a big boy. . . a big boy mature and vaccinated). He continues: «Pour cela, tous les moyens vont être bons. Je dis bien, tous les moyens. Tu vas commencer par te remuer et à apprendre à vivre comme nous ici. Il n’y a pas d’autre voie de réussite que celle-là » (135) (for that, all the means are going to be good. I say it well, all the means. You will begin by making some moves and learning to live like us. There is no other way of success beside that). Moki is thus favorably disposed to his relation, Massala-Massala the newly arrived African immigrant.

Moki passes Massala-Massala through this school of experience so as to dissuade him from going back home empty-handed but to emulate them and survive in Paris. He encourages him even the more to take up the more or less dishonest job which Préfet offered him: “C’est un travail. Un vrai travail comme tout autre. Il n’y a pas de honte et de scrupules à entretenir. . . qui a dit que l’argent avait une odeur? » (166). (It is a job. A real job like every other. There is no shame or scruples to entertain. . . who said that money had a smell?). He discloses to him that he too he also engages in this kind of work when his clothing business is not doing well. He puts this question to him: “Look at my hands, are they dirty?” (166) In other words, he is asking him if his hands are smelling. Moki is seriously motivating Massala-Massala to take up the available job. That is economic empowerment. His disposition to Massala-Massala and by extension to other victims of social existence in Paris is, in this context, favorable and empowering.

Thirdly, Moki’s disposition to other victims of social existence, as reflected in the representative case of Massala-Massala, is favorable and disempowering. After all the encouragement given to Massala-Massala by the flipside protagonist, he falls into the police net for a criminal act, is imprisoned and thereafter repatriated along with a host of other African immigrants in a humiliating way.

The study, therefore, concludes that the flipside protagonist’s disposition towards Massala-Massala and by extension others in the flipside society in Paris is of two types: favorable and empowering on the one hand but favorable and disempowering on the other hand. Similarly, Préfet’s disposition to Massala-Massala and by extension to some others in the Parisian flipside society is favorable and empowering on the one hand and favorable and disempowering on the other. But his disposition towards his family members and community is unfavorable and disempowering as can be gleaned from this account by the narrator: Préfet was the Parisian who had no business in the country. Not even a house. He had actually not returned home for over twenty years. His family – his mother, his brothers and sisters since his father had died – wallow in extreme misery with no news of him. He had been cut off from the realities of his place of birth and childhood (156). It should be recalled that the flipside protagonist’s disposition to his family members and community back home in Brazzaville is favorable and empowering. Our analysis here shows clearly that *Bleu-blanc-rouge* satisfies the three conditions necessary for classifying a literary work as a flipside work and so qualifies as a flipside work.

CONCLUSIONS

This study has established that Alain Mabanckou’s debut novel, *Bleu-blanc-rouge* which fits into *migrITUDE* literature, is also a flipside work. The plot projects a protagonist Moki, who is a victim of social existence and who remains such till the unraveling of the plot despite the significant influence he wields on his flipside society back home in Congo Brazzaville and in Paris. It has also been established that the flipside protagonist’s disposition towards other victims of social existence is

of three types: favorable and empowering for the flipside society back home in Congo Brazzaville, but partly favorable and empowering and favorable and disempowering for his fellow victims of social existence in Paris.

Préfet, a notable flipside character in the novel has a disposition which is favorable and empowering in some instances but favorable and disempowering in others concerning victims of social existence in Paris. On the contrary, his disposition is unfavorable and disempowering towards his family members and others in the flipside society in Congo Brazzaville.

Alain Mabanckou, a migritude writer and a humanist seems to throw into relief in *Bleu-blanc-rouge* the negative impact of disregarding victims of social existence (in the present circumstance, African immigrants) and discriminating against them as this is counterproductive for the host country since such tendencies transform the flipside society into a breeding ground for all kinds of cheating, lying, fraudulent activities and jailable offenses.

His apt depiction of the realities of the existence of the flipside society in the West, specifically, in Paris acts as a sensitization campaign to discourage young Africans dreaming of migrating to the West from embarking on the migratory adventure as Omar Ba aptly puts it: "N'émigrez pas! L'Europe est un mythe" (Do not migrate! Europe is a myth). Mabanckou's attack is a two-edged sword: on the one hand, he exposes and condemns the fraudulent activities of African immigrants in Paris and on the other, he denounces the thingification and marginalization of these African immigrants by French authorities, calling for positive intervention in the lives of African immigrants (the flipside society) in France.

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